

**Grade Level:** 6-8**Time Needed:** Five to 10 class periods**Lesson Plan:**

Three Cups of Tea – Young Reader’s Edition “Failure”

SUMMARY

Central Asia Institute was started when Greg Mortenson, in a failed attempt to reach the summit of K2, found himself in a remote village in Pakistan. Upon seeing that the village children had very little access to education, Mortenson set out to raise money to build a school. The first donation for the school was from a group of elementary students in Wisconsin who collected pennies—and Pennies for Peace was born! Although Mortenson failed to reach the mountain’s summit, Central Asia Institute and Pennies for Peace have had a tremendous impact on thousands of children, their families, and their villages in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, as well as here in the United States.

Throughout our lives, we will all be confronted with barriers. We will fail more times than we succeed. We will feel defeat more times than we feel triumph. But it is how we deal with our challenges—with our “failures”—that makes us who we are and sets the path for a life of confidence, dignity, integrity, respect, courage, and optimism.

In this lesson, students will examine the theme of “failure,” exploring how failure can lead to success of a different sort, as it did for Mortenson and many others throughout history. Students will be encouraged to self-reflect and think of the challenges that they face in their lives—and about how they are responding to those challenges.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read the text *Three Cups of Tea—Young Reader’s Edition*.
- Students will research and synthesize information.
- Students will use critical thinking skills to draw conclusions and form opinions.
- Students will research historical figures.
- Students will demonstrate understanding and apply learning by writing an essay, or creating a song, poem, or piece of art to display their thoughts and feelings.

SUBJECTS

- Language Arts
- Economics
- Social Studies (History, Politics)
- Speech (Oral Presentation Skills)
- Art

**THREE CUPS OF TEA—YOUNG READER’S EDITION “FAILURE” continued**

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is failure?
 - Can failure ever be a good thing? If so, when and how?
 - What historical or present-day figures have “failed” in their attempt to accomplish something?
 - How have these people turned their failure into success?
 - Have you had an experience where you think you may have failed at something that you were trying to accomplish, just to realize later that you were on a different path—one that led you to a different sort of success?
-

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- *Three Cups of Tea—Young Reader’s Edition* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, adapted by Sarah Thomson
 - *Three Cups of Tea—Young Reader’s Edition Study Guide*
 - Research tools such as newspapers, news magazines, and the Internet (Note: You may opt to pre-select websites for students to use for their research.)
 - Central Asia Institute blog, which can be found at <http://centralasiainstitute.org/field-notes/>
 - Art supplies
-

LESSON

1. Read the text *Three Cups of Tea—Young Reader’s Edition* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, adapted by Sarah Thomson. The first chapter is entitled “Failure.” Is that an appropriate title for Chapter 1? Why?
2. Do you think Mortenson continues to think of his attempt to reach the summit of K2 as a failure? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the Essential Questions with your students.
4. Facilitate a whole-class discussion on the theme of “failure,” using the Essential Questions as a guide. Allow students plenty of time to reflect on their own lives, and insist that students are

**THREE CUPS OF TEA—YOUNG READER'S EDITION "FAILURE" continued**

respectful of their peers' remarks. You may opt to allow students to journal about their own experiences with "failure," especially if you think that their responses may be too personal to share with the class.

5. Have students work independently or in small groups to research historical and present-day figures who have "failed," only to achieve in another way. Examples:
 - Theodor Seuss Geisel: Today nearly every child has read *The Cat in the Hat* or *Green Eggs and Ham*, yet 27 different publishers rejected Dr. Seuss's first book, *To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. (Source: <http://www.catinthehat.org>)
 - Michael Jordan: Most people wouldn't believe that a man often lauded as the best basketball player of all time was actually cut from his high school basketball team! Luckily, Jordan didn't let this setback stop him from playing the game; and he has stated, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." (Source: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/16823.Michael_Jordan)
 - J.K. Rowling: The author wrote the first book in the now wildly successful Harry Potter series by hand—she didn't own a typewriter—while sitting at a coffee shop in Scotland. When that first book was finished, she applied for a grant from the Scottish Arts Council that helped her buy a typewriter, and she transcribed her longhand notes into the typed manuscript for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's* (now *Sorcerer's*) *Stone*. The manuscript was rejected by 12 publishers before it was finally accepted by Bloomsbury. However, Rowling's publisher advised her to keep her day job, as "there just isn't much money in children's literature."
 - The Slinky: In 1943, during World War II, an engineer in the United States Navy named Richard James was on a new ship's trial run. As he worked, a torsion spring suddenly fell to the floor. He was fascinated by how the spring flip-flopped. When he went home, James and his wife Betty made a long steel ribbon of tightly coiled steel into a spiral. They began selling the slinky in 1945. The Jameses had difficulty selling Slinky to toy stores, but in November 1945 they set up an inclined plane in the toy section of Gimbel's department store in Philadelphia, and the Slinky was a hit! Four hundred were sold within 90 minutes. In its first 60 years, 300 million Slinky toys were sold, and the original Slinky is still a best-seller. The toy continues to delight and inspire creativity in kids and adults all over the world. (Source: <http://mag.amazing-kids.org/non-fiction/stories/inventions-that-were-mistakes/>)
 - Ice Cream Cones: At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, two vendors stood next to each other—one was serving zalabia, a crisp pastry cooked in a hot waffle-patterned press, and the other was serving ice cream. The weather was hot and the ice cream vendor soon ran out of cups to serve his ice cream. The vendor next to him rolled up his waffle into a cone shape and topped it with the ice cream. It was a hit! The waffle vendor was Ernest A. Hamwi. [Although this story is the most accepted version of the ice cream cone invention, six months earlier, an Italian pushcart vendor in New York City named Italo Marchiony sold lemon ice in a cone. He received a patent for a mold for making pastry cups to hold

**THREE CUPS OF TEA—YOUNG READER'S EDITION "FAILURE" continued**

ice cream (not the actual cone) in December 1903 – six months before the World's Fair.]
(Source: <http://mag.amazing-kids.org/non-fiction/stories/inventions-that-were-mistakes/>)

6. Explain to students that they will work independently or in small groups to write an essay or create a poem, song, or piece of art that reflects their thoughts and feelings on the theme of "failure," and how we choose to respond when things in our lives don't go exactly as we had planned. Encourage students to think about the challenges that they've faced in their lives, or may face, and how they might respond to these challenges to set the path for a life of confidence, dignity, integrity, respect, courage, and optimism.
7. Set aside one class period where students are given the opportunity to present their final projects.
8. If time permits, have the students produce an art show around the theme of "failure." Invite your school community to the show, allowing students time to present their final project—either a reading from their essay, reciting their poem, performing their song, or displaying their art.

IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE ALL LEARNERS

- English Language Learners
 - Ensure that students understand the Glossary of Terms (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section).
 - Review vocabulary in the text's index.
 - Ask students if the concept of "failure" has the same meaning or connotation in the country that they came from as it does in the United States.
 - Are there any figures from the students' native countries who have demonstrated success given enormous obstacles? Allow students to share these stories.
- Special Education
 - Allow students to work together in groups to research and create their final project.
- Gifted and Talented
 - Encourage students to research additional/historical figures who have faced seemingly insurmountable odds to achieve their purpose, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Susan B. Anthony, Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Helen Keller, or Malala Yousafzai. What can be learned from their journeys?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Challenge students to think about their lives five or 10 years from now. What do they hope to accomplish in that time? Can they foresee obstacles that may inhibit their "success"? How might they decide to look at those obstacles to turn them from potential "failures" to opportunities for success of another kind? Have students write a letter to themselves five or 10 years from now in which they reflect on this idea of "failure." Examples:

**THREE CUPS OF TEA—YOUNG READER’S EDITION “FAILURE” continued**

- Do students plan to graduate from high school and attend college? What if they have classes in high school that are *really* difficult or a teacher with whom they do not get along? What if they don’t get into the college that they wanted? How will they respond?
- Do students play sports? What are their goals for the sport that they play? Do they hope to make a varsity team? What will happen if they try their best, but still don’t make the team?

DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

- Use digital publishing or imaging tools to design a series of posters unified around the theme of failure, adversity, perseverance, or success. Students might select several inspirational quotes to feature on each poster, or feature images of famous people who refused to let failure stop them. Be sure that none of the images selected are copyright protected. Finally, determine a way to share the finished collection. Perhaps your class will create a gallery somewhere on campus or in a local community space. Be creative and share your inspiration!
- Dory the Fish from the movie *Finding Nemo* coined a popular saying: “Just keep swimming.” As a class, create a multimedia presentation with music, still photographs, and/or videos and burn it to a DVD; or compile a binder filled with inspirational images, quotations, and essays. Make sure to include quotations from the book *Three Cups of Tea*. Keep the finished product available for viewing in class, or present it as a gift to the counseling department at your school. Sometimes people need a little inspiration to “just keep swimming.”

Tell us about your project! We’d love to see samples of your students’ essays, letters, and artwork. Send photos and/or descriptions to info@penniesforpeace.org.